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### What Reflection Teaches Us

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## What Reflection Teaches Us

June 10, 2017 | By Patrick Bennett  
Workforce Development  
Instructional Practices

I think it can be easy to get caught up in the day-to-day and sometimes forget that our interactions with others have impact, both positive and negative. It takes a lot of energy to be mindful and present throughout our day, but it's a really important skill. Lowney (2003) argues that "we're all leaders and we're leading all of the time, well or poorly" (loc. 125). I agree completely and love this quote because it can be applied to just about anything and everything we do. Simply replace the word leader with another such as educator, or team member, or parent, or friend. So if we're all leaders [insert your role] all of the time, whether we think about it or not, what can we do to help to ensure we're doing it well? One proven way is intentional reflection and listening to our inner voices.

Reflective practices have been utilized to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning for centuries. In recent decades, researchers such as Schon (1987) and Valli (1997) have helped to categorize and refine reflective practices into types that include critical, in-the-moment, deliberative, personalistic, technical, in-action, on-action, anticipatory, etc. All of these reflection types have unique characteristics and a specific process and methodology for how and when they are best applied, however, all share the common process of taking dedicated time to stop and to think critically about an event that is either expected to happen or has already happened. For example, Valli (1997) and Schon (1983) have written extensively on the benefits of reflection-on-action as a valuable reflection type that involves recalling after the fact what took place and how an unanticipated outcome might have occurred. We might also take a short pause during an event and reflect-in-action to do the same thing. I think these practices are vital in our professional and personal lives.

In my experience, reflection has been an invaluable tool that has enabled greater self-awareness, opportunities for self-correction, and for continuing to refine my leadership style to involve what Valli (1997) refers to as intentionally listening to other and inner voices. In this practice of personalistic reflection, you become attentive to your inner voices or your self-talk and the voices around you to examine past events, your beliefs, and biases. The desired outcome of this practice is to gain greater clarity about what experiences might be helping you and which might be holding you back. Taking the time to listen and be open to correcting behavior or outcomes can change the way you interact with those around you. The mirror of reflection not only allows us to see ourselves more clearly, but can also help improve our future interactions and responses, thus, leading to improved outcomes.

My suggestion is to take time to reflect on the day's events, on your many personal interactions, the decisions you made, and the outcomes. Set aside 15 minutes at the end of each day to reflect much as you probably set aside 15 minutes at the beginning of each day for planning. Reflection is a powerful tool that over time will help you improve your work, your

relationships, and your leadership style. Whether in the classroom, in the office, or at home, REFLECT. It might just improve how you see yourself and also how others see you.

## **References**

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## **About the Author**

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